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ABSTRACT

This document is intended to create an opportunity for teens and adults to talk together and find ways to make their community a place where young people can grow up successfully. The discussion guide begins with a brief statement of purpose and a brief explanation of study circles and their objectives. The remainder of the guide consists of discussion materials for four 2-hour study circle sessions. Each session outline contains some or all of the following elements: a session goal; an introduction; facilitator tips; an outline of points to be covered in the session; discussion questions; and wrap-up questions. The study circle session topics are as follows: (1) what it's like to be a young person in the community; (2) how young people in the community are doing; (3) how the community can be transformed into a better place for young people; and (4) how study circle participants can move from words to action. The following items are appended: a list of ideas for action; a comparison of dialogue and debate; tips for study circle participants; tips for study circle facilitators; note taking tips; suggestions for involving young people in study circles; ways of moving from dialogue to action; and guidelines for making and using a fact sheet. (MN)

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A Community for All Generations — Teens and Adults Working Together

A guide for public dialogue and problem solving

Version 1.0

Study Circles Resource Center — A project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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Using this guide

This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with:

- A "Fact Sheet" prepared especially for this discussion in your community. (See Appendix H, *How to Make and Use a "Fact Sheet,"* on page 32 in this guide.)
- *Organizing Community-wide Dialogue for Action and Change* (available from SCRC, or on-line at www.studycircles.org)
- *A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators* (available from SCRC, or on-line at www.studycircles.org)

Also available from SCRC are study circle discussion guides on numerous topics, including education, student achievement, racism and race relations, and strengthening families.

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A Community for All Generations — Teens and Adults Working Together

Table of Contents

Introduction

Discussion Materials

Session One: What is it like to be a young person in our community? 3

Session Two: How are young people in this community doing? (Refer to **Fact Sheet** in Appendix H.) 7

Session Three: How can we make this community a better place for young people? 10

Session Four: Making a difference: How can we move from words to action? 13

Appendices

A. Ideas for Action 16
B. A Comparison of Dialogue and Debate 18
C. Tips for Study Circle Participants 20
D. Tips for Study Circle Facilitators 22
E. Note-taking Tips 27
F. Involving Young People in Study Circles 28
G. Moving from Dialogue to Action 30
H. How to Make and Use a "Fact Sheet" 32

Introduction

The purpose of this discussion guide is to create an opportunity for teens and adults to talk together, and find ways to make our community a place where young people can grow up successfully. Most public issues involve and affect young people as well as adults. But there is often little chance in most communities for all of us to work *together* on community problems in a positive and respectful way. Study circles offer a way to do that.

Why Study Circles?

Study circles are small-group discussions where everyone has a voice. They provide a simple way for community members of all ages to talk respectfully and solve problems together. Through study circles, adults and teens can get to know each other, form new relationships, and build a community where everyone thrives.

Facilitator Tips for Session One:

- Review the Tips for Study Circle Facilitators in Appendix D.
- Use the amount of time suggested for each part of this session.
- Make everyone feel welcome. Be sure each person has a chance to speak and to hear the other group members.
- Make sure everyone understands that we all have an equal voice in the discussion. Don't let the adults take over!
- Have someone record main ideas from this session on large sheets of paper so that everyone can read them. (There are suggestions on how to take notes in Appendix E.)

More tips on next page

Session One: What is it like to be a young person in our community?

Goals for this session:

- To create ground rules for discussion
- To get to know each other
- To think about what it's like to be a young person in our community

Introduction

Each of us has something important to offer our community. We are *all* responsible for making it a better place for everyone to live and grow up. Today, as we get to know each other, we will talk about what it's like to be a young person in our community. We will share some of our hopes and concerns. Sharing our stories and ideas will set the stage for the rest of our study circle.

Welcome and Introductions — 10 minutes

The facilitator will:

- Welcome participants
- Explain the study circle process
- Tell the group about the program
- Talk about the role of facilitator (see page 4)
- Ask for a volunteer recorder — this person will keep track of the important ideas that come from the conversation. (See Note-taking Tips in Appendix E.)

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Facilitator Tips for Session One Continued:

- Save the notes so that you can refer to them in later sessions.
- Start a list to keep track of "Action Ideas" as they come up during the study circle. Write the ideas on a piece of newsprint. You can add to this list every time you meet, and use it in Session Four, when you're making plans for the Action Forum.

The Role of the Facilitator

In a study circle, the facilitator:

- manages the discussion.
- helps the group set its own ground rules.
- does not have to be an expert on the issue.
- helps the group examine the issue from many points of view.
- helps the group talk respectfully and productively.
- does not join the conversation or offer an opinion.
- helps the group develop ideas for moving to action.

Set Ground Rules — 20 minutes

To help our study circle work well, we need to agree on how we will talk with and listen to each other. Our facilitator will record the guidelines we develop on newsprint so that we can refer to them every time we meet. We can use the ideas below as a starting point to develop our own list of ground rules.

- Listen well, and treat each other with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to be heard.
- One person talks at a time.
- Speak for yourself, and not as the representative of any group.
- Don't mention someone by name who isn't in the room.
- If you are offended, say so, and say why.
- It's OK to disagree.
- Everyone helps the facilitator keep things on track.
- What we say in the study circle is confidential, unless we all agree to change that.

Introductions — 20 minutes

Working in pairs, answer the following questions:

- What is your name?
- How long have you lived in the community?
- How did you come to live here?
- Why did you want to join this group?

After 5 minutes, each person will introduce his or her partner to the group.

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Icebreaker Exercise — 15 minutes

Break into small groups (2 to 4 people of different ages) to look over these questions and talk about your answers together:

Think about what it is like — or was like — to be a teenager. Take a few minutes to answer these questions about yourself.

1. The year is_____and I am _____ years old.
2. I live in _____, population_____.
3. I go to _____.
4. I'm good at _____.
5. Signs of the times (social/political) include _____.
6. After school/work, I hang out at_____.
7. My friends and I eat and drink _____.
8. Today, I'm wearing _____.
9. For fun, I _____.
10. The music I listen to is about _____.
11. I'm worried about what will happen to me if_____.
12. My parents give me advice about _____.
13. I'm getting lots of pressure to_____.
14. One thing I really don't understand is_____.
15. One thing I feel proud about is_____.
16. My plans for the future include_____.

Discussion questions — 45 minutes

As a whole group, talk about the following questions. You may not have time for all of them. Pick the questions that seem most important to you.

- What's good about being young? What's difficult about it? (If you're an adult, what are your strongest memories about being young?)
- What is our community like for teenagers? What's good about growing up here? What's bad?
- In this community, how do teens and adults get along? Do you know people of different generations who aren't members of your family?
- What is your background? (Think about things such as religion, family history, ethnicity, and education.)
- What rights should a young person have? What responsibilities? How should these rights and responsibilities be decided? How can teens and adults make these decisions together?

Wrap-up questions — 5 minutes

- Based on the discussion so far, what have you learned?
- What common themes did you notice?
- What are some differences?

Closing — 5 minutes

Facilitator Tips:

- Thank everyone for coming and sharing.
- Remind everyone that it is very important to attend every session.
- Hand out the **Fact Sheet** on your community, and remind people to look it over before Session Two. (See Appendix H.)

Facilitator Tips for Session Two:

- Use the amount of time suggested for each part of this session.
- Remind everyone about the ground rules.
- Review the main ideas from last week.
- Use the **Fact Sheet** you have prepared to guide the discussion. You may also use it in future sessions. (See Appendix H.)
- Have someone record main ideas from this session on large sheets of paper so that everyone can read them. Save the notes so that you can refer to them in later sessions.
- Remember to record new action ideas on the "Action" list you started last week.

Session Two: How are young people in this community doing?

Goals of this session:

- To look at our community from the point of view of a young person
- To get a picture of how youth are doing in this community
- To think about how to improve the community for young people

How are we doing? — 10 minutes

Begin by having each person think about answers to the following questions: (Post the questions where everyone can see them.)

- When you think of young people and our community, what do you feel good about?
- What concerns you?

After a few minutes, ask everyone to share with the group, and record their ideas on newsprint. This will help the group start to build a picture of the community as it is now.

Taking a closer look — 15 minutes

Keep these questions in mind as you review the **Fact Sheet**.

- When you look at the Fact Sheet, what stands out for you?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What trends or patterns do you see?
- What is going well for young people in our community?
- Where are the gaps between the needs of youth and the services provided?
- What does the data tell us about families and home life in our community?
- What does the data tell us about the standard of living — jobs, housing, and income levels — in our community?

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Discussion questions — 35 minutes

Use the following questions to expand the conversation. You may not have time for all of them.

- What do you think are the main issues, problems, and challenges that teens in our community are facing? What is at the root of these problems?
- Are there people in the community who aren't in this discussion who would know about other problems or concerns? What would they tell us?
- What activities in the community are making a positive difference for young people and adults?
- What are teens contributing to our community now? How can we all create other opportunities for young people to get involved?
- What is happening in other communities that might work here?

Brainstorming...
is a way for a group to come up with lots of ideas.

Purpose:

To help us be creative
To come up with lots of ideas in a short time

Guidelines:

All ideas are OK.
Don't stop to talk about ideas.
Don't judge ideas.
Build on others' ideas.

How to do it:

Anyone can offer an idea.
The facilitator or recorder will write down every idea.
Write down the ideas in the words of the speaker.

Picturing the future

Brainstorm — 20 minutes

A brainstorming exercise will help the group create a vision for the future. Ask someone to record the group's ideas on newsprint.

It is the year 2020. This community is a wonderful place for young people to grow up and succeed.

- What is the community like? How does it work?
- How do people get along?
- How do teens spend their time?
- What roles do young people play in the community? What roles do adults play in the community?

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Discussion questions — 25 minutes

Look at the vision for the future, and compare it to what's going on today. Consider the following questions:

- In what ways is our "picture" of the community different from the way things are today?
- What would we like to change?
- What roles could young people play in changing the community?
- What roles could adults play?

Wrap-up questions — 10 minutes

- Based on the discussion so far, what have you learned?
- What common themes did you notice?
- What are some differences?

Closing — 5 minutes

Facilitator Tips:

- Encourage the group to look ahead to the next discussion, and think about the role all of us can play in community life.
- Thank everyone for coming

Facilitator Tips for Session Three:

- Use the amount of time suggested for each part of this session.
- Remind everyone about the ground rules.
- Review the main ideas from the previous sessions.
- Have someone record general themes from this session on large sheets of paper so that everyone can read them. Save the notes so that you can refer to them in the final session.
- Remember to record new action ideas on the "Action" list.

Session Three: How can we make this community a better place for young people?

Goals of this session:

- To talk about what we want
- To look at different ways to make our community a better place for young people

How can we make this community a better place for young people? — 90 minutes

As we said in earlier sessions, teens today face new and different challenges. Families are under more stress. Many people live with poverty and violence every day. Some schools don't feel safe. Movies, television, and the Internet send conflicting messages about what's important in life.

The good news is that people of all ages are finding ways to make communities better places to live. This session will help us look for new ways to work together.

Using the Views

We will use the following viewpoints to get our conversation started. Each view is written in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. **Some viewpoints that are important to you might not be on this list. Feel free to add other views.**

To begin, someone may read the viewpoints out loud. Then, we will use the following questions to help us talk about them:

- What viewpoints are missing? What would you add?
- Does one of the viewpoints, or a combination of views, come close to your own? Why?
- What life experiences or values have shaped your views?
- What are you learning from others in your study circle?

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A range of views

View 1 — Teens and adults need more chances to really get to know one another. Adults and young people should be able to turn to one another for help and advice. We should treat each other with respect. We should make our community a place where people of all ages can develop friendships. Big Brother/Big Sister programs, sports teams, or volunteering to help the elderly could help us get to know each other.

View 2 — All of us, especially parents and guardians, should pay more attention to what teens are doing. It's too easy for teens to get into trouble. Everywhere we look, we see sex, violence, and drugs. We need to know where young people are and how they spend their time. Parents, guardians and teenagers should talk about what they see on TV and the Internet. And all of us — young and old — need to help young people resist peer pressure to do risky things.

View 3 — We need more services in the community to support families. Children who grow up in strong, caring families do better. Our community should help families by offering parenting classes, support groups, family recreation programs, and child-care co-ops. We should work to reduce teen pregnancy and child abuse. We can also make sure the community provides food, shelter, health care, financial assistance, or other services for the people who need them.

View 4 — We should make sure there are plenty of activities for young people. "There is nothing around here to do," is something we say or hear a lot. Teens want to get involved in activities that are fun, such as sports and summer recreation, music and arts programs, and block parties. Coffeehouses and community recreation centers are good places for young people go and spend time. Local businesses should offer paying jobs and volunteer opportunities for young people to earn money and gain experience.

View 5 — Young people and adults should take rules seriously. We need to be clear about "right" and "wrong." Breaking the law is not acceptable — for anyone. We need strong school policies, and clear laws. That way, anyone who breaks the rules will be held accountable. Our community will be a better place for everyone when we are all held to the same high standards.

Views continued on next page

View 6 — Young people should have a real voice in this community. This is because all of us — young and old — should contribute to community decisions, especially about things that affect us directly. Also, we will all benefit if we make the most of young people's energy and talents in all kinds of community organizations and activities. When young people are involved in community life, everyone benefits.

Wrap-up questions — 25 minutes

To sum up this session and prepare for next week when we will be developing ideas for action and change, consider these questions:

- What were the main themes in our discussion?
- What did teens and adults see differently? What ideas did they have in common?
- What are the biggest challenges we're facing?
- What community strengths can we build on?
- How can we all work together to move our ideas forward?

Closing — 5 minutes

Facilitator Tips:

- Remind everyone that the next time we meet, we will talk about what we want to do in our community.
- Thank everyone for coming.

Session Four: Making a difference: How can we move from words to action?

Goals of this session:

- To review and summarize the earlier conversations
- To develop action ideas for the Action Forum

Facilitator Tips for Session Four:

- Use the amount of time suggested for each part of this session.
- Review the main ideas from the previous sessions.
- Refer to your "Action Ideas" from earlier sessions, and "Ideas for Action" in the Appendices when you do your brainstorm exercise.
- To help sort the action ideas into categories, label 4 pieces of paper:
  √ "Individual Actions"
  √ "Small-group Actions"
  √ "Organizational Actions"
  √ "Whole-community actions

Getting ready for the Action Forum

By participating in this study circle, we have already made our community a better place. When people share their hopes and concerns, and begin to understand each other, the community gets stronger.

This project is also intended to help us make a difference in other ways. At the conclusion of the discussions, study circle participants will meet to share their ideas at a large meeting called an **Action Forum**. At the meeting, participants will have a chance to sign up for **action groups** to work on some of the ideas from the study circles. Sometimes the records from each study circle are combined and turned into a report for public officials, community leaders, residents, the media, and other groups.

Session Four is designed to help us sum up and prioritize our ideas for the Action Forum. For examples from other communities, please see "Ideas for Action" in Appendix A.

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How to do it:

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The facilitator or recorder will write down every idea.
Write down the ideas in the words of the speaker.

Review action ideas from earlier sessions and brainstorm — 20 minutes

When we go to the Action Forum, each study circle will report its top-priority action ideas. Our task now is to develop a list of action priorities to take to the Action Forum.

First, let's review the action ideas we thought of in earlier sessions, and list them on big sheets of paper labeled as follows:

- Individual Actions
- Small-group Actions
- Organizational Actions
- Whole-community Actions

Next, let's brainstorm some more action ideas. Thinking about the goals we talked about in Session 3, what actions could we take to make those goals a reality? Add new ideas to the lists we have started.

Prioritize action ideas — 35 minutes

To prepare for the Action Forum, we will look over the lists we just made, and narrow them down. Combine any ideas that are nearly the same. We will use the following questions to choose the ideas we think are most important in each of the four categories (individual, small-group, organizational, whole-community):

- What two or three ideas seem most practical and useful?
- Are any of these ideas already being tried?

After answering these questions, the group might agree on its top priorities for action. If we don't reach agreement through discussion, another option is to have members "vote" for their favorite ideas.

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Discuss how to move forward — 35 minutes

We have identified the action ideas in each category that we think are most important. For each idea, let's talk about how we could move to action, by asking the following questions:

- What would it take to turn this idea into reality?
- What kinds of support or help do we need?
- What is already happening in the community that would help this idea? What other groups might we connect with?
- What would our next steps be?

Wrap up questions — 20 minutes

- What have you learned in this study circle that has surprised you?
- Has this study circle affected the way you think about these issues? If so, how?
- Will this study circle affect your involvement in the community? If so, how?
- How will you continue to make a difference on these issues?

Closing — 10 minutes

Facilitator tips:

- Identify a volunteer who will report on your circle's priorities at the Action Forum.
- Urge everyone to attend the Action Forum, and remind them of the date, time, and place.
- Thank everyone, and ask them to fill out an evaluation form.

By taking part in this study circle, we have started a process that will strengthen the connections between young people and adults in our community. Now, we have a chance to turn our conversations into action. By joining with other study circles to share our ideas for change, we can move forward together to make sure that our community is a place where people of all ages can succeed.

Appendix A — Ideas for Action

The ideas in this list include some examples of what other communities have done. Use this list to start your thinking.

What can we do as individuals?

- Ask members of the school board, city council, or other groups which make important decisions to give young people a place at the table in their public meetings.
- Get involved in community life. You don't have to be a public official or a well-known person to make a difference.
- Volunteer your time at school, community centers, and other local organizations like food banks and shelters.
- Make new friends, especially with people of different ages and from different racial, ethnic, and religious groups.
- Be a mentor. Get to know the teenagers in your neighborhood. Get involved in tutoring, be a Big Brother/Big Sister, coach a sports team, or participate in a youth organization.
- Talk with and listen to the teenagers in your life, and find out what they think.

What can we do as small groups of people, as institutions, or as a community?

- Expand youth input into school and school district issues.
- Create a list of community assets, and help people find out about services for teens and adults.
- Create a community web site focusing on teens and young adults. Invite high school students and adults to maintain it.
- Urge local boards to create openings for teens.
- Encourage local businesses to connect with young people in the community as apprentices or volunteers.
- Create leadership development programs for local teens.
- Organize a community-school arts project — such as a photo exhibit, mural, cultural festival, musical event, or theater production. Form a steering committee of adults and youth.

Continued on next page

- Work with your local government to provide transportation services for young people who aren't near the community center.
- Create a neighborhood newsletter or ask the local newspaper to start a youth column.
- Open up conversations between teenagers and the police.
- Work on service-learning or community-service projects that bring young people and senior citizens together.

Appendix B —
A Comparison of Dialogue and Debate

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.
Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.

In **dialogue**, finding common ground is the goal.
In **debate**, winning is the goal.

In **dialogue**, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.
In **debate**, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.
Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.

Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.
Debate defends assumptions as truth.

Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.
Debate causes critique of the other position.

Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.
Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.
Debate creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right.

In **dialogue**, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.
In **debate**, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.

Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.
Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.

Continued on next page

In **dialogue**, one searches for basic agreements.
In **debate**, one searches for glaring differences.

In **dialogue**, one searches for strengths in the other positions.
In **debate**, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.

Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.
Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationships and often belittles or deprecates the other person.

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.
Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.

Dialogue remains open-ended.
Debate implies a conclusion.

Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucile Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, call the national ESR office at (800) 370-2515.

Appendix C —
Tips for Study Circle Participants

Our goal in a study circle is to understand the issue better. We don't have to learn a lot of new facts and figures. We also don't have to agree with each other. We will look at different viewpoints, and we will talk to one another as equals. How we talk to one another is as important as what we say.

The following tips will help you and your study circle succeed.

Listen carefully to others. Make sure you are giving everyone a chance to speak. Don't interrupt people. When you show respect for other people, it helps them show respect for you.

Keep an open mind. You will want to explore ideas that you have rejected or didn't consider in the past.

Do your best to understand other points of view. It is important to understand what other people think and why they feel the way they do. This will help you find solutions that work for everyone.

Help keep the discussion on track. Make sure your remarks relate to the discussion.

Speak your mind freely, but don't take over the discussion. Leave room for quieter people. Being a good listener shows respect for others. This makes it easier for quiet people to speak up.

Talk to the group rather than the leader. Try to look around the group when you talk. That will help others to know that they are part of the conversation.

Talk to individuals in the group. A study circle should feel like a conversation. Try to involve everyone. If you feel someone has something to say, draw them out. Ask them questions about their ideas.

Tell the leader what you need. The leader guides the discussion, sums up key ideas, and helps to make things clear. If something is not clear, ask the leader about this. Others might have the same concern.

Continued on next page

Value your life stories and opinions. Everyone in the group, including you, is special. No one is the same. All our lives have been different. This is what makes the study circle interesting. Make sure your voice is heard. Your wisdom and ideas are important.

It's OK to disagree. Differences keep the group lively. If you do not agree with an idea, ask questions. But don't get carried away. Be respectful.

Remember that humor and a pleasant manner will help. When you keep your sense of humor, people will like listening to you. You can disagree with someone without making a personal attack. When you talk, your body "talks," too. Pay attention to your "body language."

Appendix D —
Tips for Study Circle Facilitators

As a study circle facilitator, you do not need to be an expert on the topic being discussed. The important thing is to be well prepared for the discussion. This means you will need to ...

- understand the goals of the study circle;
- be familiar with the discussion materials;
- think ahead of time about how the discussion might go;
- prepare questions to help the group think more deeply about the subject.

In some sessions, you might find that there is more to talk about than you can cover in two hours. Choose what you think will be most interesting to your group. (Your group might want to consider having extra meetings.)

Do your best to prepare ahead of time. This will make it easier for you to give your full attention to helping the circle accomplish its goals.

Stay neutral! It is most important to remember that, as a facilitator, you should not share your personal views or try to push your own agenda on the issue. You are there to serve the discussion, not to join it.

- Set a relaxed and open tone.
- Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed space.
- People enjoy well-placed humor.

Explain the purpose of the study circle, and help the group set ground rules.

At the beginning of the study circle, remind everyone that the purpose of the study circle is to work with one another to look at the issue in a democratic way. Remind them that your role as leader is not to be an "expert." Also, make it clear that you will not take sides in the discussion. Your job is to keep the discussion focused, and make sure the group follows the ground rules.

Refer to the basic ground rules listed in Session One. Then ask people to develop their own ideas.

Stay aware of and assist the group process.

- Besides keeping the group focused on the content of the discussion, you will keep track of how people are communicating. Some people talk a lot. Others tend to be quiet. Be aware of this, and make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Consider splitting up into smaller groups to look at different viewpoints. This gives people a chance to talk more easily about their personal connection to the issue.
- Try not to interfere with the discussion unless you have to. Don't allow the group to turn to you for the answers.
- Resist the urge to speak after each comment or answer every question. Let people respond directly to each other. The most effective leaders often say little, but are constantly thinking about how to move the discussion forward.
- Once in a while, ask participants to sum up the most important points that have come out in the discussion.
- Don't be afraid of silence! People sometimes need time to think before they respond. If silence is hard for you, try counting silently to ten before you rephrase the question. This will give people time to collect their thoughts.
- Don't let anyone take over the discussion. Try to involve everyone.
- Remember that a study circle is not a debate, but a group dialogue. If the group forgets this, remind them of the ground rules.
- Keep careful track of time!

Help the group look at various points of view.

- Make it clear to people that you will never take sides on the issue. Your role as a facilitator is to be fair and to keep the group focused on their own thinking.
- Use these written materials to help everyone consider a wide range of views. Rely on the guide rather than presenting something as your idea. Referring to the guide helps you stay neutral. You might ask the group to consider a point of view that hasn't come up in the discussion. Ask the group to think about the pros and cons of different ways of looking at an issue or solving a problem.

- Ask people to think about the concerns and values that underlie their beliefs.
- Don't allow the group to focus on just one point, or one person's story.
- Help people find common ground, but don't try to force agreement.

Ask open-ended questions that don't lend themselves to easy answers.

Open-ended questions are questions that can't be answered with a quick "yes" or "no." They push people to think about why they believe what they do. Open-ended questions also encourage people to look for connections between different ideas. *Examples:*

- What seems to be the key point here?
- Do you agree with that? Why?
- What do other people think of this idea?
- What would be a strong case against what you just said?
- Have you had any experiences with this that you can share with the group?
- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
- What do you think is really going on here? Why is that important?
- How might others see this issue?
- Do you think others in the group see this the way you do? Why? Why not?
- How does this make you feel?

Questions to use when people disagree:

- What do you think s/he is saying?
- What bothers you most about this?
- What is at the heart of the disagreement?
- How does this make you feel?
- What might lead a reasonable person to support that point of view?

- What do you think is really important to people who hold that opinion?
- What is blocking the discussion?
- What might you be willing to give up in order to come to some agreement?
- What don't you agree with?
- What do you find most convincing about that point of view?
- What is it about that position that doesn't work for you?
- Could you say more about what you think?
- What have we missed that we need to talk about?

Questions to use when people are feeling discouraged:

- Say a little about how that makes you feel.
- Where can you find some hope?
- Can the problems that you are talking about be solved in any way? How?

Closing questions:

- Where did we agree and disagree today?
- What have you heard today that has made you think, or that has touched you in some way?

Be aware of how people from different cultures communicate.

- When issues of race and culture are a part of the conversation, be ready to address the feelings that might surface.
- Even though some of the conversation may revolve around differences, set a tone of unity in the group. Yes, there are differences — but we have enough in common as human beings to allow us to talk together in a constructive way.
- Having two facilitators is often helpful. This sets an example of unity. The co-facilitators could be a man and a woman, a white person and a person of color, an adult and a young person, a manager and a worker. (If some facilitators are

newly trained, team the new people with people who have experience with cross-cultural issues in study circles.)

- Sensitivity, empathy, and familiarity with people of different backgrounds are important qualities for the facilitator. If you have not spent much time with people from other cultures, get involved in a local community program that helps you do this.
- Help people to appreciate and respect their own and others' communication styles. How people were raised affects how they communicate. For example, in some cultures people are raised to take charge and say exactly what they think. In other cultures, people are expected to be more reserved and keep their thoughts to themselves. Some cultures value listening more than speaking. In others, taking a stand is very important. Point out to the group that there is more than one good way to communicate. Understanding one another takes practice! Your leadership should show that each person has an important contribution to make to the group.
- Talk about how cultural labels, or stereotypes, are unfair.
- Remind the group, if necessary, that no one can speak for his or her entire culture. Each person's experiences, as an individual and as a member of a group, are different.
- Urge group members to talk about themselves and their own cultures, rather than other people's. This way, they will be less likely to make false generalizations about other cultures. Also, listening to others tell their stories will help break down stereotypes and build understanding.

Appendix E — Note-taking Tips

Note taking serves many purposes:

- It helps group members stay on track and move the discussion along.
- It provides a way to capture the wisdom and common themes that develop in the discussion.
- Notes from all the circles in your program can be turned into a report that summarizes what you have done.

How to do it:

- The facilitator can ask for a volunteer; a co-facilitator can serve as a recorder; or an outside observer can play this role. You can keep your notes on a tablet, blackboard, or flip chart.
- Capture big ideas and themes, not every word.
- Use the words of the speaker as closely as possible.
- Check with the group to make sure your notes are correct.
- Some groups organize their records this way:

  √ Areas where we agree
  √ Areas where we disagree
  √ Areas that are mixed

- Write neatly so everyone can read the notes
- Remember, people should be talking to each other, not to the note taker!

Appendix F —
Involving Young People in Study Circles

In most cases, study circle programs are initiated and organized by adults. The following information focuses on the particular challenges and advantages of involving young people in study circles — as participants *and* as organizers.

Recruiting diverse participants is the central task in organizing a program. Having young people participate is essential. Remember, young people know how to reach their peers. Be sure to involve them in the organizing effort.

Start by making a list of the different kinds of participants or groups you hope to involve. (Think about the organizations and groups in your community that serve youth, and about the places where young people get together informally.) Then, beside each group, list a person, organization, network, or other way you could reach that group.

While publicity and other methods are important, the best way to recruit someone is to invite them personally, one-on-one. If you have several people helping with recruitment, ask each person to be responsible for a certain number of invitations.

Some youth programs have boosted recruitment by offering incentives, such as merchandise (T-shirts, hats, lapel buttons, movie passes). In a few programs with ample funding, participants received stipends for participation in the early stages. Sometimes young people get extra academic credit for facilitating or participating in a school or community program.

Specific Tips:

- Ask the young organizers and facilitators to help recruit others to join; and get their advice about the best ways to reach other youth.
- Listen to how young people talk about the issue, and use that language to describe the study circle project.
- Go where young people are to invite them into the program. Visit schools, community clubs, and places of worship.

Continued on next page

- Think about creative ways to partner with schools, clubs, congregations or other organizations that serve youth.
- Plan meetings and circles around school, sports, and work schedules. Ask young participants what times work for them.
- Look for convenient study circle sites that can be reached on foot, or with public transportation.
- Make sure there is always food and time for fun!

Young people as study circle facilitators

Many young people are especially effective as study circle facilitators. Young facilitators are powerful symbols of youth as leaders, and in this role, are learning and modeling collaborative, respectful, and democratic leadership.

All kinds of young people can be effective facilitators if they have good listening skills. Think *beyond* the usual leaders. Plan to pair an adult and a teen facilitator for each circle. Be sure there is time for the pairs to get to know one another and decide how they are going to work together. Watch out for the special dynamics of intergenerational groups to make sure youth have an equal voice. Don't let the adults dominate. (See *A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators*, available from SCRC, and on-line at www.studycircles.org.)

Appendix G —
Moving From Dialogue to Action

The Action Forum

Study circles lead to action and change in many ways. One of the ways in which you will work toward action and change is through an Action Forum.

An Action Forum is a large-group meeting at the end of a round of study circles. At this meeting, ideas from all the study circles are presented. In most cases, there will be several action ideas that have broad support.

Action groups or task forces form to move these ideas forward. Participants have the chance to work in these action groups, or to stay involved in other ways. In programs that continue over time, more and more people get involved in further rounds of study circles, and many kinds of action occur.

See below for an example of the kinds of things you may do at your Action Forum.

Typical Parts of an Action Forum (1 ½ to 3 hours)

1. Refreshments, social time, entertainment, gallery walk (time to read summaries from each circle posted around the room)

2. Welcome and introductions
   - Welcome everyone, and introduce sponsoring organizations.
   - Review agenda.
   - Summarize the study circle effort.
   - Recognize and thank facilitators and other key volunteers.

3. Reports from the study circles
   - A representative from each circle speaks for a few minutes, summarizing key issues or concerns, plus major ideas for action.

4. Moving to action
   - Master of ceremonies summarizes the most common themes for action, and invites participants to sign up for an action group or task force.
   - Participants choose group or task force, and sign up.

Continued on next page

- Leader for each action group collects names and sets the first meeting.
- Interested people sign up for facilitator training, or to help organize future study circles.

5. Closing remarks
   - Closing remarks (including how the action efforts will be tracked and tied to further organizing)
   - Next steps (including plans for another round of circles, celebration, or check-in meeting)
   - Thanks to all

Appendix H —
How to Make and Use a "Fact Sheet"

Many study circle programs develop "fact sheets" to use along with their study circle discussion guides. A discussion guide helps people look at the broad issue; a fact sheet provides "hard data" about how the issue is playing out in a particular community. Fact sheets can cover a range of information — from general to specific.

A good fact sheet paints a picture of the community and the issue, and provides a factual framework for the discussion. It should include:

- data that describes the community as a whole;
- data that illustrates the situation or issue under discussion;
- information about what is already being done in the community to address the issue.

Get a few people together to think about what kind of information should be in your fact sheet. Be sure this group is diverse and represents many points of view. Don't forget to include young people in this process

Keep the information simple, clear, easy to understand, and brief. Provide enough data to ground the discussion in fact without overwhelming the participants. Be sure the data is balanced and objective, and relates directly to the issue. Keep text to a minimum. Always cite your sources. Simple graphics — such as pie charts or bar graphs — are a good way to get complex information across. You can also use newspaper articles or official documents.

After you have collected all of your information and you are ready to put your fact sheet together, ask: "What is really *essential* to the discussion?" Resist the temptation to include everything!

For suggestions specific to your program, see next page

In a program focusing on "A Community for All Generations: Teens and Adults Working Together," we suggest that you include the following kinds of information in your fact sheet.

Community data:

- Basic community demographics: age; gender; race; income levels; population patterns and turnover (*Possible sources: local government; community web site; census information; local library.*)
- Community economic information: number of single-parent households; number of students on lunch subsidies; statistics on rentals and home ownership (*Possible sources: local government, Realtor association, library, and school district; Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); state departments of education and labor.*)

Issue-related data:

- School information: student demographics; student achievement rates; student involvement in athletic and other extracurricular programs; drop-out and truancy statistics; graduation statistics (*Possible sources: local school district; school web site or handbook; state department of education.*)
- Behavioral information: teen pregnancy rates; tobacco, alcohol, and drug use; runaways; teen suicide rates (*Possible sources: local or state social service agencies; police department; state office of substance abuse; state youth census information, such as Kids Count Data; school district.*)
- Juvenile crime information and gang activity (*Possible sources: local police department; regional law enforcement agencies; state department of corrections; local courts; youth advocacy groups.*)
- Youth involvement in community service or service-learning projects; mentoring programs; other youth community-volunteer activities (*Possible sources: local school district; service clubs; faith-based organizations; youth organizations.*)

Continued on next page

Information about current programs and services:

- Youth programs: recreation; scouting; Boys and Girls Clubs; faith-based youth groups, 4-H clubs; Big Brother / Big Sister programs (*Possible sources: community directories; local library; community web site; school district; congregations; local phone book.*)
- After-school programs (*Possible sources: school district; local social service agencies.*)
- Parenting groups; child-care co-ops (*Possible sources: local social service agencies; cooperative extension service; congregations.*)
- Seasonal activities for youth (*Possible sources: local government and school district.*)
- Youth shelters; drug rehabilitation centers for youth (*Possible sources: social service agencies; congregations; youth advocacy organizations; local phone book.*)

Note: At the end of Session One, facilitators will hand out Fact Sheets to the participants to help them prepare for the next meeting. Session Two begins with a discussion of the information in the Fact Sheet.

Face-to-face Dialogue and the Study Circles Resource Center

Public, face-to-face deliberation has always been at the heart of American democracy. In 1989, the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation, created the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) to help all kinds of people engage in dialogue and problem solving on critical social and political issues. Since then, SCRC has worked with hundreds of communities, on many different issues.

SCRC draws its name from the "home study circles" of the late nineteenth century, sponsored by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in New York. Those circles provided adult education through small-group discussion. SCRC has taken the idea of small-group, face-to-face discussion, and adapted it to provide a means of structuring diverse, large-scale participation in democratic dialogue. These circles offer participants the opportunity not only to discuss critical social and political issues, but also to take action and create change on those issues. Central to SCRC's approach is the belief that everyone should have a voice in our democracy and in solving public problems. We support communities in discovering the value of inclusive democratic dialogue, and in developing the skills to be able to make this kind of exchange an ongoing part of community life.

To fulfill its mission, SCRC has developed a process known as "community-wide study circles," to bring large numbers of people together for creative community change. In these programs, large numbers of people from all parts of the community meet in small, diverse groups to talk about a particular issue. These study circle programs lead to a wide range of action efforts.

SCRC publishes discussion guides on a variety of issues. We can also help you organize study circles in your community:

- providing advice on organizing and facilitating study circles;
- helping develop strong, diverse organizing coalitions;
- teaching how to develop or customize discussion guides;
- explaining how to set program goals and assess progress;
- helping communities connect dialogue to action and change.

For more information, please contact us:
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